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ABSTRACT

The International High School, a collaborative project of the New York City Board of Education and the City University of New York, offers limited-English-speaking immigrants a five-year articulated high school-college curriculum, beginning with grade 10, leading to either a high school diploma or a number of associate degrees. The curriculum was designed to bridge the gap between high school graduation requirements for limited English-proficient students and college entry expectations. In response to immigrants' needs the curriculum combines substantive study of all subject matter with intensive study and reinforcement of English language skills. The school has replicated successful teaching strategies used at LaGuardia Community College's Middle College, a public alternative high school founded in 1974. All graduates of the International High School are guaranteed admission to LaGuardia Community College, and students may take college-credit courses during the high school program. Courses specifically designed for high school students and taught by college professors are available. High school students are part of the college community and have full use of the college facilities. (MSE)

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THE INTERNATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AT LAGUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE: BRIDGING THE GAP

by Eric Nadelstern

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Introduction

The dropout rate in urban high schools across the nation has reached crisis proportions. In New York City, the rate of attrition for public high school students is 38%. The New York State Board of Regents has published an action paper entitled, Increasing Minority Access to the Licensed Professions, which states that "high school dropout rates are significantly higher among minorities than non-minorities." Aspira of New York, in Minority Secondary Education in New York City, reveals an 80% dropout rate for Hispanic students. As a result, there has been an increased focus upon the disproportionate number of language minority students in our schools, who account for 36.23% of all children between the ages of 5 and 17 in New York City as reported by the State Education Department in their 1985 analysis of Diversity in New York State. These students represent a high risk population due to their limited English proficiency, cultural isolation and low socioeconomic status which often results in pressure to drop out of school and find a job.

In response to the need reflected by these statistics, and in recognition of the gap between high school graduation requirements for limited English proficient (LEP) students and college entry expectations, The International High School, formerly known as Middle College High School II, opened on the campus of LaGuardia Community College in September, 1985. This collaborative project, jointly sponsored by the Board of Education of the City of New York and the City University of New

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York, offers LEP students a high school/college curriculum combining substantive study of all subject matter with intensive study and reinforcement of English. The goal of the instructional program is to enable each student to develop the linguistic, cognitive and cultural skills necessary for success in the mainstream of school and society.

The International High School has replicated successful strategies and practices developed at LaGuardia'a Middle College, a public alternative high school founded in 1974. All graduates of The International High School are guaranteed admission to LaGuardia Community College. While enrolled in the high school, students may take courses in a variety of areas for both high school and advanced placement college credit. Courses specifically designed for high school students, and taught by college professors, are available. Students at The International High School are members of the college community, enjoying full use of the facilities, including the library, gymnasium, cafeteria and recreational programs.

Educational Philosophy

The International High School offers recently-arrived immigrant high school students a sequential course of secondary school and college instruction leading to the New York State High School Diploma and the A.A., A.S. or A.A.S. degrees. The principles which underlie the instructional and curricular design of this articulated, five-year high school/college program, (grades 10 through 14), are as follows:

- LEP students require the ability to understand, speak, read and write English with near-native fluency to realize their full potential within an English-speaking society;
- In an increasingly interdependent world, fluency in a language other than English must not be viewed as a handicap, but rather as a resource for the student, the school and the society;
- Language skills are most effectively learned in context and embedded in a content area;
- The most successful educational programs are those which emphasize rigorous standards coupled with effective support systems;
- Attempts to homogenously group students in an effort to make instruction more manageable, preclude the way in which adolescents learn best; that is, from each other;
- The carefully planned use of multiple learning contexts in addition to the classroom, (e.g. learning centers, career internship sites, field trips), facilitates language acquisition and content area mastery;
- Career education is a significant motivational factor for adolescent learners; and,
- The most effective instruction takes place when teachers actively participate in the school decision-making process, including: instructional program design, curriculum development and materials selection.

Collaboration with the college substantially enhances the capacity of the high school to develop an educational program

which embodies these principles.

Methodology

The faculty members of The International High School utilize English as a Second Language (ESL) techniques as a means of reinforcing English language development and facilitating the acquisition of content across the curriculum. An ESL approach differs from English language instruction provided to native speakers of English. It is distinguished by its attention to the problems encountered in acquiring a new language, sensitivity to other cultures, and understanding of how the native languages of LEP students compare and contrast with English. ESL stresses the development of English language listening, speaking, reading and writing skills so that students learn to effectively communicate within the standard spoken and written conventions of the language.

As students move from concrete to abstract levels of language acquisition, teachers present the content in greater complexity, while maintaining a level of comprehensible input commensurate with the level of English skills development. Collaborative learning strategies encourage students at different levels of English language acquisition and academic preparation to work in small groups as they explore their subject area studies. With the teacher functioning as a facilitator, students are taught to rely upon themselves and each other for revision of written assignments, study and development of vocabulary, and mastery of content.

Student Profile

Admission to The International High School is open to all newly-arrived New York City residents between the ages of 14-18 years old, for whom 10th grade placement is appropriate. For admissions consideration, students must be limited English proficient, (as determined by a test score on the English version of the Language Assessment Battery below the 21st percentile), and have resided in the United States for less than four years. Junior high school students who apply for admission must be referred by their guidance counselors as requiring an alternative educational environment to realize their full potential. Over-the-counter entrants from overseas must be referred by the Board of Education's Office of High School Admissions as students who would benefit from this alternative academic setting.

For the 1985-86 school year, there are 70 foreign-born 10th grade students enrolled at The International High School. They come to us from 25 countries, speak 16 languages other than English and range in age from 14-18 years old. There are 41 young men and 29 young women in this first class, representing a broad spectrum of English language profiiencies, native language abilities, literacy skills, and prior academic preparation.

Present plans call for admitting a new 10th grade class of 130 students in September, 1986, bringing total enrollment up to 200 for the 1986-87 school year. An additional 150 entering 10th grade students will be admitted in September, 1987, when enrollment in grades 10-12 is projected for 350. By September, 1988, The International High School will have reached full

enrollment of 450 students.

Faculty Profile

All full-time staff members are licensed and certified Board of Education personnel. Under a unique administrative arrangement, the Principal serves as chief building administrator for both The International High School and Middle College, thus providing the new school with the benefit of an instructional leader who has effectively managed a successful high school/college collaborative. The Principal holds the honorary rank of Department Chair at LaGuardia, and attends all Chairpersons' Meetings. The Assistant Principal-in-Charge of The International High School, responsible for the day-to-day administration of the school, was selected among qualified applicants by a committee of Board of Education and LaGuardia Community College representatives, including the Superintendent for Alternative High Schools, the Principal, the Vice President and Dean of Faculty, the Dean of External Affairs, and the Dean of Articulated Settings.

More than 100 applicants applied for 7 teaching positions, 1 guidance counselor line, and 3 paraprofessional vacancies. Selection was made by the Principal and Assistant Principal, applying the following criteria:

-Subject matter expertise;
-Evidence of professional involvement;
-Cross-cultural sensitivity;
-Proficiency in languages other than English; and,

-Training in ESL methodology and/or experience with LEP students.

The present staff is proficient in 7 languages other than English, including Spanish, Chinese, Korean, French, Haitian Creole, Italian and Yiddish. A Faculty Personnel Committee will recommend candidates for future staff vacancies.

In addition to full-time faculty members, several of LaGuardia's college professors have been provided with release time to teach a course at the high school. At the same time, the high school teachers have been provided with the opportunity to teach college classes at LaGuardia on an adjunct basis.

Instructional Program

The school year at The International High School has been divided into 3 cycles or trimesters to parallel the quarterly calendar in place at LaGuardia College. The high school students register for their classes at the start of each cycle just as the college students do. During 1985-86, the following core curriculum of courses has been required study for all students:

Global Studies: This course is designed to lead to an understanding of how different cultures affect one another. After a review of the many factors which influenced the development of civilization, European and Asian countries are observed and studied on the world scene in the 20th century.

International Myths and Folklore: An English communication arts

class in which the interconnectedness of cultures is seen through repeating themes in the folk cultures of the world.

Investigations in Marine Biology: Students study the nature of marine life through carefully monitored lab experiments and the reading of source material. Written lab reports reinforcing the processes of scientific observation and investigation are submitted after each experiment.

Personal and Career Development: A social science course designed to make students more aware of their interests and aptitudes, while providing them with career English skills and job acquisition strategies.

Sequential Mathematics: A 3-year course of study that integrates algebra, geometry, trigonometry, logic, probability, statistics and mathematical systems.

Integrated Learning Center: Students are engaged in small-group interdisciplinary learning activites designed to facilitate English language acquisition and supplement content area studies.

Students complete their programs by registering from among the following elective courses taught by faculty members at The Internatonal High School, Middle College and LaGuardia Community College: Body and Mind Awareness, Building Maintenance Mechanics, Computer Science, Computer Writing, Floor Hockey, Guitar, Human Physiology, Introduction to the American Criminal Justice System, Piano, Soccer, Volleyball, World Literature and Writing

for Publication. These classes are also open to students at Middle College, providing for the integration of our LEP students with those native speakers of English.

Extended-day study opportunities beyond the regular 8:00 A.M. to 2:10 P.M. class schedule are provided. Students participate in small group tutorials designed to promote communicative competence in English, reinforce native language skills, extend content area studies and explore career education alternatives. Extracurricular teams and clubs, as well as an ESL class for parents, are also offered.

Career Education

A career/occupational education program serves as the focus of The International High School. All students participate in a mandatory out-of-school internship program for one-third of each school year. This graduation requirement allows LEP students to investigate careers in business technology, human services and liberal arts and sciences, while providing them with opportunities to further develop their English language skills within the context of the workplace.

Results

The evaluation design for The International High School calls for pre- and post testing on the following standardized assessment instruments during the 1985-86 school year: Language Assessment Battery (English and Spanish Editions), Criterion

Referenced English Syntax Test, New York City Reading Test, New York City Mathematics Test, and New York State Regents Competency Test in Mathematics. Additionally, psychologists from LaGuardia Community College and Hunter College have been conducting individual assessments of each student to ascertain growth in cognitive and social development on a year-to-year basis. There are also plans to holistically compare pre- and post treatment writing samples.

At this point in the school year, post tests have not yet been administered. However, there have been impressive results in the areas of student retention and academic achievement. Average daily attendance during the last reporting period, (which extended from the opening of school in September, 1985 through the end of December, 1985), was 97.1%. There have been no students who have dropped out of school. In Cycle I, (September, 1985 to December, 1985), the passing percentage for all classes taken was 94.9% (excluding grades of incomplete), or 82.8% (including grades of incomplete). For Cycle II, (December, 1985 to March, 1986), the passing rate was 92.1% (excluding incomplete grades), or 88.4% (including incomplete grades).

In comparison, citywide average daily attendance in New York City's public high schools is 78%. Local school district statistics have also shown that 10th grade students are at greatest risk of dropping out of school. As a result, we are confident that The International High School at LaGuardia Community College will establish a new measure of excellence in the delivery of secondary school and college-level instructional services to students of limited English proficiency.